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Montgomery County

Environment and Transportation
Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony: Bill 18-22 Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Montgomery County Council

Position: SUPPORT

Hearing Date: September 20, 2022

I am Delegate Linda Foley and I represent District 15 within Montgomery County. I support passage of Bill 18-22 which would (1) prohibit the sale and use of combustion engine-powered leaf blowers and leaf vacuums countywide within 6 months after enactment, (2) authorize a reimbursement program to partially offset the cost of replacing a combustion engine powered leaf blower or leaf vacuum with an electric leaf blower or leaf vacuum; and (3) generally, revise the law regarding noise control.

I have heard from many constituents who favor the prohibition and sale of these gasoline-powered leaf blowers in their neighborhoods.

This bill would align Montgomery County with similar laws passed in several jurisdictions within the county, including Chevy Chase Village, the Town of Chevy Chase, and the Town of Somerset. Washington D.C.'s new law went into effect on January 1st of this year. The bill also would conform with hundreds of other localities around the country that have banned the sale and use of these dirty, inefficient, noisy, and annoying products. Recently, [California](#) passed a statewide ban on off-road two-stroke engines, including gas-powered leaf blowers.

These (high decibel) noisemakers operating at a low frequency penetrate walls more easily than the higher frequency emitted by electric blowers. In fact, a gas-powered leaf blower used in a neighborhood at 65 decibels emits a noise that can be heard up to 23 homes away from the place of use, compared to just 6 homes away for electric blowers. The high-decibel, low-frequency noise from combustion leaf blowers impacts sleep, creates tension, and can damage an individual's heart. Bill 18-22 aims to reduce the micro and acute health and environmental effects on our bodies and neighborhoods caused by gasoline-powered blowers.

It is a widely established fact that being around loud noise, especially those at low frequencies, causes adverse health effects such as hearing loss, tinnitus, systemic vascular disease, and mental illness. Users of these machines, who are often underrepresented minorities, are being put in dangerous situations that are detrimental to their health. These gas blowers also affect birds, frogs, and bees as they are forced to move away from the noise, disrupting the natural pollination process. Plant life is also harmed by their force and heat.

With the progress being made in our area and in Washington, D.C. to alleviate these ill effects caused by gasoline-powered blowers, it only makes sense that Montgomery County act. These machines do more harm than good. I urge Council Members to join the wave sweeping our nation and blow away these noisy, annoying, and harmful gas-powered leaf blowers from our community.